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(dir.)

## Kenya in Motion 2000-2020

Africae

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## Preface

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# Preface

*Marie-Aude Fouéré*

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This edited volume was initiated in 2013. At that time, Christian Thibon (2010–2014) was the director of the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA) in Nairobi and I was myself its resident researcher (2011–2014). The responsibility for this editorial project was shared with the new director in 2014, Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle (2014–2018), and handed over to me when I succeeded her in 2018. With *Kenya in Motion*, the three directors aim to provide a panorama of the first two decades of the 2000s in Kenya that can be useful to students and researchers, but also accessible to the general public. It is modelled on *Le Kenya contemporain*—a book by Karthala publishers and edited by François Grignon and Gérard Prunier—that came out in 1998 but dealt mainly with the late 1980s and early 1990s.

However, since the changeover in 2002, Kenya has been striving for change. On the one hand, throughout the 2000s, the Kenyan economy modernised and there has been a strong and steady growth rate which, by 2015, moved Kenya into the lower middle-income bracket. In June 2008, former President Mwai Kibaki's Kenya Vision 2030 national development programme announced its ambitions: it was “a roadmap for accelerating transformation of (the) country into a rapidly industrialising middle-income nation by the year 2030.” This strategy notably took the form of developmental capitalism with massive investments in infrastructure mega-projects (railway, airport, port, dams, etc.). This policy of mega-projects continued after 2017 with President Uhuru Kenyatta's national development programme, the “Big Four Agenda,” which more firmly asserts redistribution and democratisation as a goal. At the political level, the adoption of a new Constitution in 2010 and the implementation of decentralisation from 2013, which was strongly supported by Kenyans, propelled the country towards democratisation; it encompasses the fight against the injustices of the past that are still present and are producing blatant inequalities. But the path towards the proclaimed transformations has been chaotic: the 2007 elections were marred with violence, caused too many victims, traumatised Kenya, and weighed in on the next two elections. Recent assessments of Vision 2030 are mixed while the effects of the Big Four Agenda remain tenuous. Criticism resonates in a country where civil society, one of the most dynamic in Africa, acts as a pressure force on a political class still locked in its patron-client and ethnic logic.

In view of such changes—be they expected or planned, but also hindered or even disordered—, it was imperative for a research centre based in Nairobi to document and analyse the last twenty years of Kenyan political, economic and social life, from 2000 to 2020, in a book accessible to the greatest number of people. *Kenya in motion*, which is published both online and in print and available in both French and English—thus making it possible to discuss with all our English-speaking colleagues and to enter in a dialogue with the recent and ambitious *Oxford Handbook of Kenyan Politics* edited by Nic Cheeseman, Karuti Kanyinga and Gabrielle Lynch (2020)—brings together the contributions of specialists from Kenya. Some contributions cover a broad spectrum (political economy, social history, development, decentralisation) while others address more specific themes (arts, school, religion, land, water, security, trade, etc.). Six short texts called “Focus” are added to the fourteen chapters that make up this volume. They enrich certain chapters with their close focus on banking, higher education, slavery, sacred forests, religious adherence and the globalised art scene. Together, these texts provide both a synthetic grasp and particular visions of Kenya in the first quarter of the twenty-first century.

We wish to thank several institutions and individuals. First of all, our deepest gratitude goes to the colleagues who contributed to the book—doctoral students, newly graduated doctors, and experienced researchers—for their sustained commitment to IFRA projects and for their unfailing patience. Secondly, this project would not have been possible without IFRA’s financial and human resources support, nor without the OpenEdition Books platform, which hosts the publisher’s brand “Africae” and its “Studies” collection in which this book is being published. Within IFRA, our special thanks go to Chloé Josse-Durand and Marion Asego, respectively for the proofreading of some texts and for the administrative and financial support. We are also very grateful to our colleague Claire Médard from IRD (French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development) for her involvement and rigorous peer reviewing. Our warmest thanks also go to Antoine Kauffer for his efficient editorial work, and to Bastien Miraucourt, in charge of editing at the CNRS based at the Les Afriques dans le monde (LAM) laboratory in Bordeaux and in charge of the publications of the French research institutes of sub-Saharan Africa, without whom this book could not have existed. Finally, our gratitude goes to all the translators of the English-language version of *Le Kenya en marche*, that is, *Kenya in motion*, who have enthusiastically and professionally put their language skills at the service of IFRA through the “UN Volunteers” online platform.